

REMARKS

A petition to extend the time for response by one (1) month is enclosed herewith.

It is respectfully brought to the attention of the Patent Office that this amendment is filed on even date of the filing with a Request for Continued Examination in connection with the present application.

Claims 1- 11 and 16 - 22 were previously pending in the application. Claims 1 – 11 and 16 – 22 have been canceled by this Amendment. A new independent apparatus claim 23 and new dependent claims 24 – 30 depending ultimately therefrom have been added by this Amendment. A new independent method claim 31 and new dependent claims 32 – 35 depending ultimately therefrom have been added by this Amendment. Claims 23 – 35 are currently pending.

In the Office Action, claims 1- 11 and 16 - 22 are rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over various combinations of Tung et al (U.S. Pat. 5,953,938), Bronander (U.S. Pat. 1,773,167), Shibuya (JP8-49161), Nelson (U.S. Pat. 5,404,848), Henry (U.S. Pat. 6,473,998), and Eriksson (U.S. Pat. 2,817,227).

It is respectfully submitted that the prior art rejections of claims 1- 11 and 16 - 22 under 35 USC §103(a) are now moot in view of the cancellation of claims 1- 11 and 16 – 22.

Additionally, it is respectfully submitted that new claims 23 – 35 patentably define over the prior art of record and are allowable. New independent apparatus claim 23 of the present invention recites an arrangement for removing moisture from items of clothing that includes an absorbent body, means forming a contact path along which the absorbent body and a first item of clothing are in contact with one another during a moisture transfer run, means for disengaging the absorbent body and the first item of clothing from contact with one another at the contact path exit, means for reducing the level of moisture retained by the absorbent body, and means for advancing the absorbent

body and the first item of clothing along the contact path. The contact path has an entry, an exit, and an extent extending between the contact path entry and the contact path exit. As further recited in new independent apparatus claim 23 of the present invention, the absorbent body absorbs moisture from the first item of clothing as the absorbent body and the first item of clothing are in contact with one another along the contact path extent such that the level of moisture retained by the absorbent body is greater at the contact path exit than at the contact path entry. Additionally, the means for reducing the level of moisture retained by the absorbent body is operable, as recited in new independent apparatus claim 23 of the present invention, to dispose the absorbent body at a level of moisture at the contact path entry that is lower than the level of moisture retained by the absorbent body at the contact path exit. The means for advancing the absorbent body and the first item of clothing along the contact path advances the absorbent body and the first item of clothing such that the first instance at which the absorbent body is in moisture absorbing contact with the first item of clothing occurs at the contact path entry, the absorbent body and the first item of clothing are advanced along the contact path to permit the absorbent body to absorb moisture from the first item of clothing, thereby leading to an increase in the level of moisture retained by the absorbent body as the absorbent body and the first item of clothing reach the contact path exit, and the absorbent body and the first item of clothing are advanced out of moisture transferring contact with one another at the contact path exit. In accordance with new independent apparatus claim 23 of the present invention, the means for advancing is operable to dispose the absorbent body at the contact path entry for a subsequent advancing movement of the absorbent body in contact with a second item of clothing during a subsequent moisture transfer run along the contact path, and the means for advancing and the means forming a contact path are configured such that the level of moisture retained by the absorbent body increases in correspondence with the advancement of the absorbent body and the respective item of clothing along the contact path extent.

It is submitted that the arrangement recited in new independent apparatus claim 23 of the present invention is neither disclosed nor taught by the prior art of record. For example, Tung et al (U.S. Pat. 5,953,938) discloses a cloth washing apparatus having a

transmission device (40), a rinsing device (50), a squeezing device (60), an ironing device (70) with a heating drum (71), and a folding machine (80). The squeezing device (60) includes rollers (61) and a conveyor belt (62). The piece of cloth passes through upper squeezing rollers (63) and lower squeezing rollers (64) to remove water from the cloth. However, Tung et al (U.S. Pat. 5,953,938) does not teach or disclose a “means for advancing” or a “means forming a contact path” such that, as recited in new independent apparatus claim 23 of the present invention, “the means for advancing and the means forming a contact path [being] configured such that the level of moisture retained by the absorbent body increases in correspondence with the advancement of the absorbent body and the respective item of clothing along the contact path extent.” Instead, in the Tung et al (U.S. Pat. 5,953,938) arrangement, the contact path passing through upper squeezing rollers (63) and lower squeezing rollers (64) does not result in the level of moisture retained by the conveyor belt (62) increasing in correspondence with the advancement of the absorbent body and the respective item of clothing along the contact path extent. Since the conveyor belt (62) is non-absorbent and since upper squeezing rollers (63) and lower squeezing rollers (64) of the Tung et al (U.S. Pat. 5,953,938), in any event, squeeze moisture out of both the piece of cloth and the conveyor belt (62), it can clearly be seen that the conveyor belt (62) does not, at the end of its contact with the piece of cloth, retain a level of moisture increasing in correspondence with the advancement of the conveyor belt (62) and the respective item of clothing along the contact path extent. The squeezing rollers (63, 64) of the Tung et al (U.S. Pat. 5,953,938) arrangement perform the function of drying the cloth by squeezing the water out of the cloth. This removed water must go somewhere, water inherently drains downwardly due to gravity, and so water remains on top of the conveyor belt (62) as the piece of cloth exits the conveyor belt (62).

With regard to the other cited prior art, none of Bronander (U.S. Pat. 1,773,167), Shibuya (JP8-49161), Nelson (U.S. Pat. 5,404,848), Henry (U.S. Pat. 6,473,998), or Eriksson (U.S. Pat. 2,817,227), either alone or in combination with one another or in combination with Tung et al (U.S. Pat. 5,953,938), teach or disclose the arrangement recited in new independent apparatus claim 23 of the present invention. For example, Bronander (U.S. Pat. 1,773,167) discloses an apparatus for supplying treating liquid to a

material as the material travels over a roll 20, whereupon it can be seen that Bronander (U.S. Pat. 1,773,167) teaches away from the present invention which, in contrast to supplying liquid to a material as disclosed in Bronander (U.S. Pat. 1,773,167), removes moisture via an absorbent body.

For these and other reasons, it is respectfully submitted that new independent apparatus claim 23 of the present invention is neither disclosed nor taught by the prior art of record and is allowable. Claims 24 – 30 ultimately depend from Claim 23 and are allowable for the same reasons and also because they recite additional patentable subject matter. Moreover, it is respectfully submitted that new independent method claim 31 of the present invention is neither disclosed nor taught by the prior art of record and is allowable, as well as claims 32 - 35 ultimately depending therefrom.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, entry of the present Amendment and allowance of claims 23 – 35 is respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions regarding this amendment, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned. If an extension of time for this paper is required, petition for extension is herewith made.

Respectfully submitted



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